A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF NEO-BUDDHISM OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR AND NEO-VEDANTA OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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Department of Philosophy (Humanities)

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Supervisor

Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh
Assistant Professor
Department of Philosophy
Ranchi University, Ranchi

Research Scholar

Anshuman Ghosh
UGC NET JRF

TITLE-

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INTRODUCTION-

From the ancient to the modern world no other aspect of life has impacted ourselves so much than religion. Etymologically religion means –'binding' which comes from the word 'religare'. There has always been a quarrel between the pathways of religion and science. Science on its own tries to prove theories based on experiments, observations and conclusions, whereas the major element associated with religious ideas is -**faith.** From a different point of view religion also known as 'dharma' is associated with morality or moral behavior.

Dharma speaks about one's role to play in the society according to one's abilities(swadharma) and it also urges people to be finder of the truth, a true seeker of the absolute. Any belief may transform into superstition if the belief is not based on logic and reason. In this modern world obsolete beliefs will not be accepted by the masses if the beliefs are not changed according to the modern day thoughts of the individuals. Contemporary thinkers like DR. B.R.Ambedkar and Swami Vivekananda have tried to put their views according to the modern day people by establishing their own sect of religious ideologies i.e. Neo-Buddhism and Neo-Vedanta respectively.

The journey of Swami Vivekananda and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was really different. Whereas Narendranath was born in one of the elite families of Calcutta, Bhimrao was born in a caste called 'Mahar'- profoundly and notoriously known as **'Caste of Untouchables'.** Whereas Swami Vivekananda got a well nourished childhood which includes well parenting, affordability of good schooling, opportunities of going to the houses of several renowned personalities in calcutta, on the other Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar had faced discrimination in the name of caste and untouchability. He was never allowed to sit in the same classroom with his upper caste peers. But it was Sayajirao Gaikwad, the kind Maharaja of Baroda, who had given fellowship to Bhimrao to study abroad and with his tremendous hardwork, dedication and will power he passed Masters degree in political science and economics along with two Ph.D. degrees. But discrimination has never left him alone. His entire life is itself an example of the ruthless, baseless biased abuses that were prevalent in the then society.

Firstly, the researcher will define the schools Neo-Buddhism and Neo-Vedanta, then will try to do a comparative study of the ethical and social aspects of the two schools.

STATE OF THE ART-

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar(14.04.1891-06.12.1956)-through his entire life had fought against the system of caste and untouchability. Since childhood he had seen stereotypical thoughts and prejudiced mindsets of the upper caste people towards the lower caste one. It is obvious that the deprivation of his own people obliged him to think about them.

Due to this inhuman abuses, he decided to convert into other religion from Hinduism. That's why he did deep study of the scriptures of various religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism etc. The principles of Buddhism connected to his soul the most. What Dr. Ambedkar researched that Buddhism is the only religion that speaks about the **principle of triad i.e. Prajna, Karuna and Samata.** No other religion maintained these principles so much so like Buddhism.

Swami Vivekananda (12.01.1863-04.07.1902) was the leader of the youth. Through his inspirational words the youth of Bengal were so moved that they participated in his movement of spiritualism. He went to spread the concept of Neo-Vedanta throughout the world despite of the strict rule that no Brahmin should cross the sea.

The first area that will be discussed through my research is the ethical aspects-

Neo-Buddhism-

1) **Liberty, Equality and Fraternity** are the sole principles of the modern world. The modern people should think in that line.

2) The 22 Vows that Dr. Ambedkar had taken during conversion to Buddhism.

Through all these vows he neglected the metaphysical aspects of Hinduism and accepted the ethical principles(Noble eight fold path, Ten Paramitas) of Buddhism. He has also accepted **compassion** and **loving-kindness** as the principles of life.

Neo-Vedanta-

What Vivekananda wanted to promulgate is the concept of universal religion. He said- **'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature external and internal.**

Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy – by one or more or all of these- and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.'[1]

The basic ideas that Neo Vedanta shares with us are-

1) The essence of Neo-Vedanta is understanding Oneness.
2) The realization of God in the soul is the end of all religions.
3) Religion is realization.
4) It is completely associated with Practical Vedanta.
5) Practical Vedanta by principle speaks about universal brotherhood.

As religion is inextricably linked with society, so social aspect is my second area of research-

Social aspects-

Swami Vivekananda wanted the caste system in its original form not as a degenerated form. That is why he said- "**Caste is a very good thing. Caste is the plan we want to follow. What caste really is, not one in a million understands."[2]**

Since childhood Bhimrao had seen tremendous malpractices in the name of untouchability. His life was never a bed of roses rather a bed of thorns. Even after coming back to India after completing his Law degree, when he was appointed as the Military Secretary officer at Baroda, he was abused ruthlessly. Incidents from several parts of India have always added another bit of grave experience for him. That's why in the year 1935 he announced that though he was a Hindu by birth, but he would not die as a Hindu. Accordingly, on 14th October, 1956 along with 5 lakh followers he had converted into Buddhism.

In the thesis paper titled- **"Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhism: A critical reflection"-** by Dr. Subrata Duary , it has been explained about the ethical, political, social, aspects of Neo-Buddhism. On the other hand no research has been done specifically on ethical and social aspects of Neo Vedanta. Thus through my research I shall try to compare the views of both the leaders' views about the ethical and social aspects of their established schools…

Another thesis paper titled- **"Swami Vivekananda's approach to Caste, Class and Exploitation: A critical study"**- by Dr. Sanghamitra Debnath tried to establish the criticisms that Swami Vivekananda had over caste and untouchability. For example- in one phase of his life he told that our dharma is don't touchism.

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[1] The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, p. 209
[2] The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. V, p. 265

PROBLEMS TO BE INVESTIGATED-

The focus of any research depends upon its problems that are being asserted through the solutions. So, in this research the entire focus will be on specific social and ethical issues that are needed to be addressed. So, in that line of thought following are the research problems are to be solved-

1) In the 21st century how religion has been used as a weapon to spread rumors?
2) How this research will be helpful to bring equanimity?
3) We can say that Swami Vivekananda was a strong supporter of caste system while Dr. Ambedkar wanted its abolition. Then how to correlate these schools?

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH AND MOTIVATION-

The main purpose of doing this research is to find out the relevance of discussion about the leaders thought process in today's context.

The main objective behind this study is-

- To recognise the harm that fanaticism is doing in the name of religious ideology.
- To specify the difference in religious thought process of Ambedkar and Vivekananda versus today's world culture.
- At a personal level, the issue of caste based discrimination being the headlines of day to day newspaper, not only disheartened me but also sparks me to write about it. This research for me is that sparking medium through which I shall try to bring out some positive outcomes in the society.

Motivation-

The first and foremost thing that I have learnt through Philosophy is the art of rational thinking through logical reasoning. What I have understood that religious ideologies are often captured as preconceived notions, no further arguments are allowed over it. That is what my goal is- to bring back rational thinking over religious concepts.

Research Hypothesis/ Research Questions-

This study specifically focuses on the comparative analysis of social and ethical aspects of Neo Buddhism and Neo Vedanta. So, the study will be done based on following research questions-

1) What are the standpoints of Neo Buddhism and Neo Vedanta on the conditions of subjugated women, and lower caste people?
2) How much focus do these schools have on the quote- 'If there is God anywhere in this universe it is in the humans all around?'
3) Do we find spreading of the principle of Oneness(which is the essence of Neo-Vedanta) in Neo-Buddhism also?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY-

Primarily this research will be done through interpretation of various books, articles thesis papers either on and by Swami Vivekananda and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. To be specific the type of research will be analytical and descriptive.

SOURCES OF DATA AND TOOLS TO BE USED IN COLLECTION OF DATA-

As this research will be a qualitative one, the researcher will try to get the findings from various books, research articles and submitted thesis papers.

ANALYSIS OF DATA-

As this research will be a comparative study, the researcher will do **self-analysis** of the findings.

ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT-DAY PROBLEM AND NEED TO THE PRESENT DAY SOCIETY-

Comparative study of ethical and social aspects of Neo-Buddhism and Neo-Vedanta- will help the modern day people to understand **the true meaning of religion.** As this study will also focus on ongoing caste based discrimination in the society, this will help the layman to understand the need of caste but eradicating the discriminating mentality.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE-

Knowledge about a specific religion is one thing, while knowing the deep rooted intricacies which are eventually discriminatory is another thing. This research will try to bring new dimensions through which both the leaders' either converge or diverge in their views.

FUTURE WORK-

Any interested scholar or journalists or political strategist may further pursue this research with the intent of finding new threads and give them a new outlook. It is also true that it is the need of the hour that we must understand the true meaning of religion otherwise religious fanaticism would appall the entire world.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERS-

Introduction

Chapter-1- Origin of Neo-Buddhism of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

Chapter-2- Ethical aspects of Neo-Buddhism of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

Chapter-3- Social aspects of Neo-Buddhism of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

Chapter-4- Comparative analysis of Ethical aspects of Neo-Buddhism of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

Chapter-5- Comparative analysis of Social aspects of Neo-Buddhism of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

Conclusion

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